Analytical Comparisons

I. Philosophies of Human Nature and Government

1. Thomas Hobbes vs. John Locke (Human Nature and the State)

- **The Comparison:** Thomas Hobbes viewed human beings as inherently "selfish and greedy," acting only in their own self-interest. He described life in a state of nature as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". Consequently, he believed people must surrender their freedoms to an **absolute ruler** with ultimate control to maintain order. In contrast, John Locke believed all humans were born with **natural rights** (life, liberty, and property) and were entitled to equality. He argued for a **natural contract** where the government's sole purpose is to protect these rights; if it fails, the people have the duty to overthrow it.
- **Relevance:** This comparison is the foundation of modern political thought. Hobbes provides the justification for absolute monarchy and centralized authority, while Locke provides the blueprint for constitutional republics and the founding of the United States.

2. John Locke vs. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (The Nature of the Social Contract)

- **The Comparison:** While both believed in the Social Contract, their focus differed. Locke emphasized the protection of **individual rights** and the "consent of the governed" to prevent the misuse of power. Rousseau focused on the **"General Will,"** arguing that because no one person can determine the desires of the people, the entire population must be the ones making the laws to achieve true freedom.
- **Relevance:** Locke's ideas led toward individualistic democracy (protecting the person from the state), whereas Rousseau's ideas led toward collective or participatory democracy (the state as an expression of the people's collective desire).

II. Social Classes and Economic Systems

3. The Gentry vs. The Middle Class

- **The Comparison:** The **Gentry** were the "old elites," a class that grew in wealth for over two centuries through land ownership and rents.

They were primarily rural and their status was based on birth and hereditary titles. The **Middle Class** emerged during the Industrial Revolution; they were "new elites" whose status was based on wealth, education, and occupation in urban centers (bankers, factory owners, lawyers).

- **Relevance:** This highlights the shift in power during the 18th and 19th centuries. The struggle between these two groups defined the political landscape as the land-owning nobles were gradually surpassed in power by the industrial and merchant classes.

4. Mercantilism vs. Capitalism (Free Market Theory)

- **The Comparison:** Under **Mercantilism**, the government and professional guilds controlled wages, prices, and quality, using high taxes and tariffs to enrich the mother country. This system kept innovation low and prices high. **Capitalism**, codified by Adam Smith, argues for a "Free Market" (laissez-faire) where the "market" (consumers) determines prices through competition. It advocates for the elimination of guild controls and tariffs to lower production costs and stimulate growth.
- **Relevance:** This shift explains why Britain was able to lead the Industrial Revolution. By moving away from state control toward a wealth-creation system, they fostered the innovation and cheap production necessary to dominate global trade.

III. The Industrial Revolutions and Responses

5. The First Industrial Revolution vs. The Second Industrial Revolution

- **The Comparison:** The **First Industrial Revolution (1750–1850)** was centered in Great Britain and was defined by **steam, coal, and textiles**. The **Second Industrial Revolution (1870–1914)** centered on Germany and the United States and focused on **electricity, petroleum, chemicals, and mechanization**.
- **Relevance:** This comparison shows the evolution of technology from basic steam-driven machines to complex electrical and chemical systems. It also marks the period when Germany and the U.S. began to surpass Britain in industrial production.

6. Western Industrialization vs. Russian and Japanese Industrialization

- **The Comparison:** Western countries (Britain, U.S.) utilized **private investment** and capitalism to industrialize. In contrast, Russia and Japan took a **state-sponsored approach**, using government funds to build railroads and factories.
- **Relevance:** This reveals how late-developing nations "caught up" to the West. However, it also shows the social cost: while the Japanese population was determined to catch the West, the Russian populace became hostile due to heavy taxation and the rapid, forced pace of change, leading to the 1905 and 1917 revolutions.

7. China (Self-Strengthening) vs. Japan (Meiji Restoration)

- **The Comparison:** China's **Self-Strengthening Movement** sought to buy Western weapons but keep traditional Chinese culture and economy unchanged. Japan's **Meiji Restoration** took the opposite approach, embarking on a program (the **Iwakura Mission**) to mimic the West entirely—politically, industrially, and militaristically.
- **Relevance:** The First Sino-Japanese War proved Japan's method was superior. The smaller, modernized Japanese army easily defeated the non-modernized Chinese forces, marking the Self-Strengthening Movement as a failure and establishing Japan as an imperial power.

IV. 20th Century Ideologies and Conflict

8. Communism (Far-Left) vs. Fascism (Far-Right)

- **The Comparison:** Both are **totalitarian** regimes that use secret police, propaganda, and purges to maintain power. However, **Communism** (Stalin) is a radical left-wing ideology that seeks to abolish national borders and private property to end class struggle. **Fascism** (Hitler, Mussolini) is a radical right-wing ideology that seeks to preserve national borders, pits the nation against "foreigners" or "impurities," and cooperates with large corporate monopolies.
- **Relevance:** While they used similar methods of control (fear and force), they were bitter enemies because their goals for the state were diametrically opposed (abolishing the nation-state vs. worshiping it).

9. Mao Zedong vs. Deng Xiaoping (Chinese Economic Policy)

- **The Comparison: Mao Zedong** focused on "pure" Marxism and egalitarian beliefs, launching the **Great Leap Forward** (peasant-led industrialization) and the **Cultural Revolution** (rejecting all tradition), which led to economic ruin and millions of deaths. **Deng Xiaoping** adopted a mixed socialist approach, including **free-market capitalist features** like privatized farms and cheap labor for exports, which successfully modernized the economy while maintaining authoritarian political control.
- **Relevance:** This demonstrates the transition of China from a purely ideological, revolutionary state to a pragmatic, global economic powerhouse.

10. Peaceful Protest vs. Self-Defense and Violent Resistance

- **The Comparison: Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.** utilized **non-violence** and mass civil disobedience, believing that peaceful change and integration were the keys to justice. **Malcolm X** (early in his career) and groups like the **Black Hand** or **Khmer Rouge** advocated for **self-defense** or **violence** "by any means necessary" to overthrow oppressors or achieve nationalistic goals.
- **Relevance:** This highlights the tactical divide within social justice and independence movements. Peaceful protest often gained more mainstream public support through media coverage, while violent resistance often led to immediate radical change or catastrophic genocides.

11. The League of Nations vs. The United Nations

- **The Comparison:** The **League of Nations** (post-WWI) failed because it lacked a membership from major powers (the U.S.) and had no way to enforce its decisions. The **United Nations** (post-WWII) was structured more effectively, with an **armed force** and economic/justice departments to maintain peace and human rights.
- **Relevance:** This shows the world's progression toward a more robust system of collective security, though challenges like the "Veto Power" of the Security Council still impact its ability to act.